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## TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Weekly Newsletter  
April 16, 2013 Hearing

### *Bills Considered by Chairman Raymond's Committee*

#### **HB 1147: Information Regarding Human Trafficking** **Author: Rep. Naomi Gonzalez**

Collaboration between governmental entities has been encouraged to create a unified front among relevant state and federal entities to end human trafficking. Recent collaborative efforts have done much to expand the understanding of the nature of human trafficking in our state, but interested parties have consistently called for greater cooperation among these entities, especially with regard to data collection. There is concern that current law does not provide sufficient clarity to law enforcement agencies and district and county attorneys with regard to collecting and sharing this information. HB 1147 seeks to ensure cooperation between these entities and the human trafficking prevention task force in collecting certain information, including statistical data.



## **HB 1453: Visitation Plan for Certain Children in DFPS Custody**

**Author: Rep. Naomi Gonzalez**



Current research suggests that frequent visitations between a parent and a young child who has been removed from the child's home by the state help to promote attachment and bonding between the child and parent and increase the likelihood of the child's reunification with the parent. Current state law does not provide for a visitation plan between a parent and a child who is in the custody of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), and DFPS's current minimum visitation requirements only provide for one visit a month between a parent and child. State law should ensure

appropriate attachment and bonding in children for whom the ultimate goal is reunification with their parents through frequent and quality visitations. HB 1453 seeks to address this issue by establishing requirements regarding parental visitations and the development of a visitation plan for certain children under the conservatorship of the state.

## **HB 1634: Personal Finance Assistance and Education for Children in Foster Care**

**Author: Rep. Dawnna Dukes**

Youth who age out of foster care must transition quickly into adulthood and be prepared almost immediately to manage their own affairs, including their finances. For many youth in foster care, multiple placements and a consequent lack of a stable home environment limit their opportunities for financial education and can keep youth from developing habits that promote financial security, leaving them vulnerable to poor outcomes as adults. While many young adults formerly in foster care do succeed in life, statistics show that, as a group, foster youth struggle more than other young adults and experience higher rates of poverty, joblessness, and homelessness. Transitioning youth should be provided financial literacy skills training before they leave foster care to ensure that they have the knowledge and resources needed to be self-sufficient, productive, and financially secure adults. HB 1634 seeks to provide life-skills training, including financial literacy education, to certain youth in foster care to improve their transition to independent living.



## **HB 2647: Relating to Reimbursement Claims by Medicaid Providers**

**Author: Rep. Sergio Muñoz Jr.**

Many doctors and other health care providers have reported significant delays in reimbursement since the recent transition of the state's Medicaid program to managed care. Before the transition, doctors' claims were often paid within 10 days of submission. Currently, some managed care organizations take up to 25 or 30 days to process and reimburse even the simplest reimbursement claim, and this period can become significantly longer if an organization has questions or concerns about a claim.



Such significant delays in reimbursement create a heavy burden for Medicaid health care service providers, who sometimes must advance funds to pay for staff and overhead between the time when

services are provided and when reimbursement is received. Concerned parties assert that Medicaid providers should not have to suffer this financial strain due to the unnecessarily delayed reimbursement. HB 2647 seeks to improve the delivery time in which health care providers under the Medicaid program are reimbursed for the services provided to Medicaid patients.

### **HB 3631: Relating to the Expunction of Unused SNAP Benefits**

**Author: Rep. Terry Canales**



The supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) provides millions of people with assistance for purchasing nutritious food and is a very beneficial resource for those who are suffering financially. Some people who receive SNAP benefits accumulate substantial balances of unused benefits, which can add up to several thousand dollars or more, because unused benefits roll over from month to month. Although there may be only a handful of cases in which people accrue inordinately large balances, more stringent accounting procedures can help to

ensure the program is not abused and to build trust in the program. HB 3631 seeks to address excessive balances of benefits in an effort to ensure that individuals use program benefits responsibly.

### **HB 3686: Relating to the Duties of the Council on Children and Families**

**Author: Rep. Elliott Naishtat**

The Council on Children and Families, composed primarily of directors of state agencies serving children and youth, was created to coordinate and leverage resources in the pursuit of efficient and effective delivery of services to children and their families. The Council recently identified opportunities to leverage additional funding to support efforts to improve interagency coordination, efficiencies, and outcomes through grants for services, infrastructure development, and other resources such as technical assistance, best practices training, and educational opportunities. Noting that many state agencies may not be able to pursue such opportunities for additional funding because of budgetary constraints and inadequate staff resources, the Council recommended that staff be funded and dedicated to interagency grant and resource coordination. HB 3686 seeks to implement this recommendation by charging the Council on Children and Families with coordinating such interagency grant or resource development efforts.



## ***Bills Voted Out of Committee***

**HB 1827:** Relating to advertising by retailers participating in the supplemental nutrition assistance program.

**Author: Rep. Naomi Gonzalez**

**HB 932:** Relating to the notification of certain legislators of the death of a child in foster care.

**Authors: Rep. Sylvester Turner and Rep. Toni Rose**

**HB 1947:** Relating to the criteria for commitment of a person with mental illness.

**Authors: Rep. Cindy Burkett, Rep. Naomi Gonzalez, and Rep. Elliott Naishtat**

**HB 3158:** Relating to certain contracts for Medicaid managed care.

**Authors: Rep. John Zerwas and Rep. Toni Rose**

**HB 3196:** Relating to licensing, certification, and arbitration requirements for certain health facilities and to the allocation of Medicaid beds in those facilities; increasing fees.

**Author: Rep. Four Price**

**HB 3401:** Relating to a nutrition and wellness education program for certain recipients of certain state benefits.

**Author: Chairman Richard Peña Raymond**

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